

## **Amendments to the Claims**

1. (Previously Presented) A microfilter element for removing impurities in the range of about 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  to about 25.0  $\mu\text{m}$  from aviation fuel, said element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton for the filter media;

the filter media including a filtration layer sandwiched between inner and outer layers;

the filtration layer being made of fiberglass or at least one polymer;

the inner and outer layers being made of a non-woven polymer;

the layers of the filter media being folded into a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats with a density of about 8 or more pleats per inner diameter inch;

the exoskeleton comprising a support screen bonded to peaks of the pleats to support the pleats in an appropriately spaced and non-collapsed condition;

the support screen providing at least 50% open flow area and a tight array of attachment points so that the filter media is sufficiently supported without having cellulose-fiber and/or woven-mesh endoskeleton support layers.

2. (Original) A microfilter element as set forth in claim 1, wherein the layers of the filter media consist essentially of the filtration layer, the inner layer, and the outer layer.

3. (Original) A microfilter element as set forth in claim 2, wherein the filtration layer has a thickness of about 0.015 inch to about 0.035 inch and wherein the inner and outer layers are each have a thickness of about 0.008 to about 0.017 inch.

4. (Original) A microfilter element as set forth in claim 2, wherein the support screen comprises a thermal-bondable mesh having cords which form a grid of approximately about 0.060 inch to about 0.150 inch by 0.060 inch to about 0.150 inch openings which are aligned with a longitudinal axis of the filter media.

5. (Original) A microfilter element as set forth in claim 4, wherein the support screen is bonded to the radially outer peaks of the filter media.

6. (Original) A microfilter element as set forth in claim 4, wherein the plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats include two end pleats joined together at a

side seam and wherein the side seam comprises an adhesive bead which encapsulates all of the layers in distal ends of the end pleats.

7. (Previously Presented) A microfilter element as set forth in claim 1, wherein the plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats include two end pleats joined together at a side seam, wherein the side seam comprises an adhesive bead which encapsulates all of the layers in distal ends of the end pleats, and wherein the adhesive bead extends radially inward between the end pleats.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) A filter element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton support structure surrounding the filter media;  
the filter media being formed from only cellulose-fiber-free and woven-mesh-free layers including a filtration layer sandwiched between inner and outer layers;  
the layers of the filter media being folded into a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats having radially-inner peaks defining an inner diameter, radially-outer peaks defining an outer diameter, and side walls extending therebetween;  
the exoskeleton support structure being attached to the radially-outer peaks and/or radially-inner peaks in such a manner that the filter media is sufficiently supported without cellulose-fiber and/or woven-mesh endoskeleton support layers;  
wherein the layers of the filter media consist essentially of the filtration layer, the inner layer, and the outer layer.

11. (Canceled)

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21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled)

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) A filter element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton support structure for the filter media;

the cylindrical filter media comprising a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats having radially-inner peaks defining an inner diameter, radially-outer peaks defining an outer diameter, and side walls extending therebetween;

the exoskeleton support structure comprising a support screen having a first set of cords extending in a first direction, a second set of cords extending in a second direction and intersecting with the first set of cords, and openings defined therebetween;

the cords being attached to each of the radially-outer peaks or each of the radially-inner peaks thereby exoskeletonally supporting the pleats in an appropriately spaced and non-collapsed condition;

adjacent cords in the first set being separated from each other by a distance  $d_1$ , adjacent cords in the second set being separated from each other by a distance  $d_2$ , and adjacent radially-outer peaks being separated from each other by a distance  $d_{\text{pleat}}$ ; and

the distance  $d_1$  between the first set of cords being about half to about twice the distance  $d_{\text{pleat}}$  between adjacent radially-outer peaks;

wherein the support screen is non-adhesively attached to the peaks.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

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30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Canceled)

35. (Canceled)

36. (Canceled)

37. (Canceled)

38. (Canceled)

39. (Original) A filter element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton support screen for the filter media;

the cylindrical filter media comprising a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats having radially-inner peaks defining an inner diameter, radially-outer peaks defining an outer diameter, and side walls extending therebetween;

the support screen comprising a sheet of screen material having a width approximately equal to the axial dimension of the filter media and a length approximately equal to the circumferential dimension of the filter media plus a seam allowance;

the sheet of screen material having lateral edges joined together at a side seam;  
and

the support screen being thermally bonded to each of the radially-outer peaks or each of the radially-inner peaks thereby exoskeletonally supporting the pleats in a spaced and non-collapsed condition.

40. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 39, wherein the side seam extends substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the filter media.

41. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 39, wherein the lateral edges overlap and are non-adhesively thermally bonded together.

42. (Original) A filter element as set forth in claim 41, wherein the support screen is made of a PVC coated fiberglass mesh.

43. (Original) A filter element as set forth in claim 39, wherein the support screen is made of a PVC coated fiberglass mesh.

44. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 39, wherein the sheet of screen material is rectangular in shape prior to its lateral edges being joined together at the side seam.

45. (Original) A filter element as set forth in claim 39, wherein the support screen is thermally bonded to each of the radially-outer peaks.

46. (Previously Presented) A filter element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton support screen for the filter media;  
the cylindrical filter media comprising a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats having radially-inner peaks defining an inner diameter, radially-outer peaks defining an outer diameter, and side walls extending therebetween;

the support screen comprising a sheet of screen material having a width approximately equal to the axial dimension of the filter media and a length approximately equal to the circumferential dimension of the filter media plus a seam allowance;

the sheet of screen material having lateral edges joined together at a side seam;  
and

the support screen being thermally bonded to each of the radially-inner peaks thereby exoskeletonally supporting the pleats in a spaced and non-collapsed condition.

47. (Canceled)

48. (Canceled)

49. (Canceled)

50. (Canceled)

51. (Canceled)

52. (Previously Presented) A coalescer element for removing free water and particulates from aviation fuel, said element comprising a cylindrical media and an exoskeleton for the media;

the cylindrical media comprising a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats having radially inward peaks;

the exoskeleton comprising a support screen having a first set of cords extending in a first direction, a second set of cords extending in a second direction and intersecting with the first set of cords, and openings defined therebetween;

the support screen being non-adhesively bonded to each of the radially inward peaks of the pleats to support the pleats in an appropriately spaced and non-collapsed condition; and

the support screen providing at least 50% open flow area and a tight array of attachment points so that the filter media is sufficiently supported without a central support tube.

53. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 10, wherein the filtration layer is made of at least one of fiberglass, nylon, polyamide, polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene, or mixtures thereof.

54. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 10, wherein the inner and outer layers each have a thickness of less than about 0.030 inches.

55. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 10, wherein the inner and outer layers are each made of a non-woven polymer.

56. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 10, wherein the layers of the filter media consist essentially of the filtration layer, the inner layer, and

the outer layer, wherein the filtration layer is made of at least one of fiberglass, nylon, polyamide, polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene, or mixtures thereof, and wherein the inner and outer layers each have a thickness less than about 0.030 inches and are made of a non-woven polymer.

57. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 56, wherein the filter media has a pleat density of about 8 or more pleats per inner diameter inch.

58. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 10, wherein the filter media has a pleat density of about 8 or more pleats per inner diameter inch.

59. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 26, wherein the support screen is thermally bonded to the peaks.

60. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 59, wherein the support screen is made of a PVC coated fiberglass mesh.

61. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 26, wherein the support screen comprises a sheet of mesh material having lateral edges joined together at a side seam which extends substantially the length of the longitudinal axis of the filter media.

62. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 61, wherein the lateral edges overlap and are thermally bonded together.

63. (Previously Presented) A filter element as set forth in claim 62, wherein the support screen is made of a PVC coated fiberglass mesh.

64. (Previously Presented) A microfilter element for removing impurities in the range of about 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  to about 25.0  $\mu\text{m}$  from hydrocarbon fuel, said element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton for the filter media;

the filter media including a filtration layer sandwiched between inner and outer layers;

the filtration layer being made of fiberglass or at least one polymer;

the inner and outer layers being made of a non-woven polymer;

the layers of the filter media being folded into a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats with a density of about 8 or more pleats per inner diameter inch;

the exoskeleton comprising a support screen bonded to peaks of the pleats to support the pleats in an appropriately spaced and non-collapsed condition;

the support screen providing at least 50% open flow area and a tight array of attachment points so that the filter media is sufficiently supported without having cellulose-fiber and/or woven-mesh endoskeleton support layers.

65. (Previously Presented) A microfilter element for removing impurities in the range of about 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  to about 25.0  $\mu\text{m}$  from fuel, said element comprising a cylindrical filter media and an exoskeleton for the filter media;

the filter media including a filtration layer sandwiched between inner and outer layers;

the filtration layer being made of fiberglass or at least one polymer;

the inner and outer layers being made of a non-woven polymer;

the layers of the filter media being folded into a plurality of longitudinally-extending pleats with a density of about 8 or more pleats per inner diameter inch;

the exoskeleton comprising a support screen bonded to peaks of the pleats to support the pleats in an appropriately spaced and non-collapsed condition;

the support screen providing at least 50% open flow area and a tight array of attachment points so that the filter media is sufficiently supported without having cellulose-fiber and/or woven-mesh endoskeleton support layers.

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